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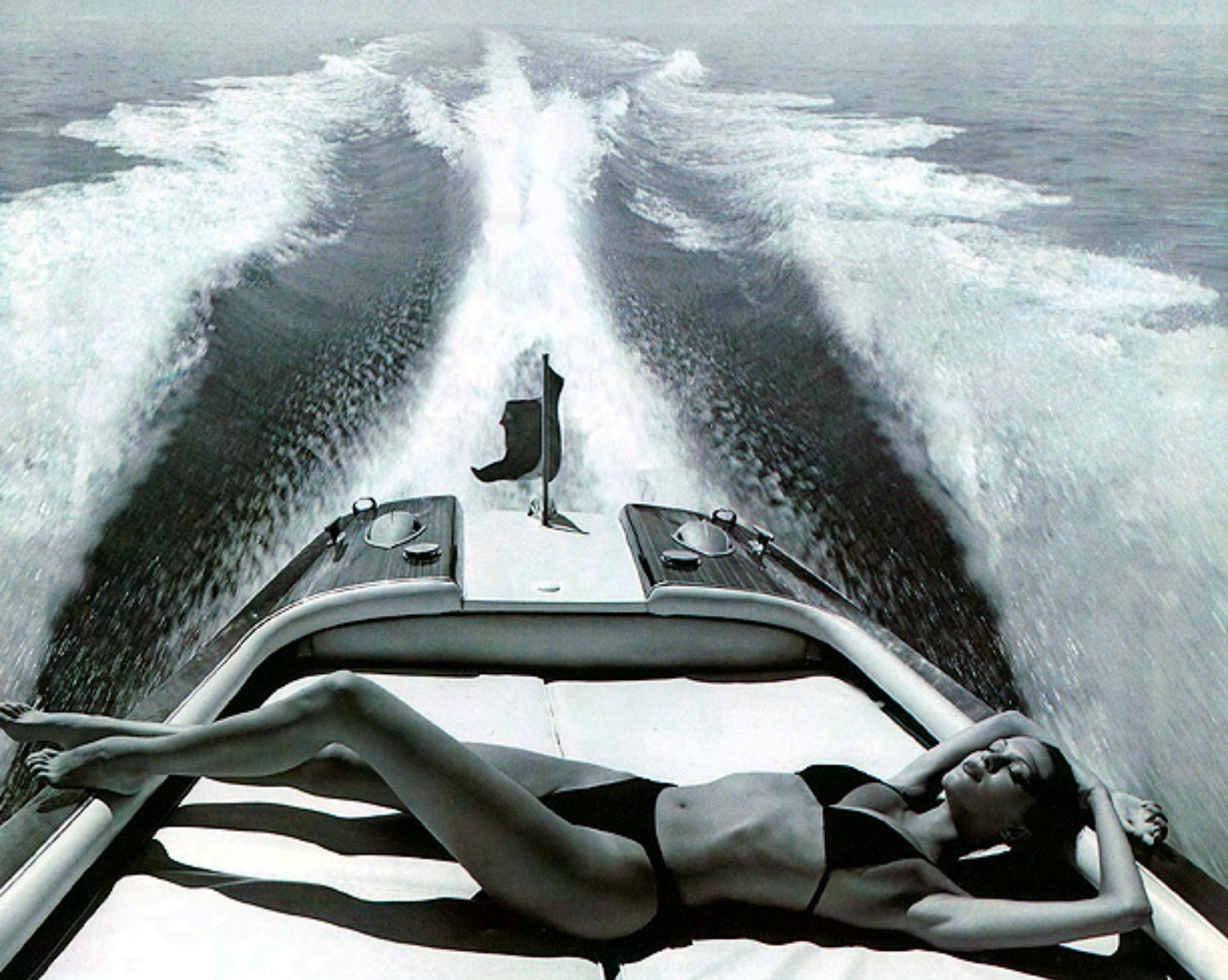
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Brighton beach

Brighton seems a highly appropriate venue for a new exhibition of photographs by Karine Laval. The seaside resort is the epitome of 'Leisure', the title and topic of Laval's latest collection.

There is a pleasing anthropological quality to her images, which are paradoxically both spontaneous and contemplative. She notes the way we all behave when removed from the demands of working life and domestic monotony, behaviour that would seem bizarre in any other circumstances. Inhibitions are shed with the cares of work, and exuberance becomes the norm rather than the exception. This behaviour is replicated wherever she takes her camera – France, Poland, Patagonia, and so on.

Leisure is a natural progression for Laval from *Pool*, her previous show at this venue (and her only previous solo show in the UK), but her use of saturated colour is common to all her previous projects. Wherever the French-born, Sorbonne-educated, New York-based photographer takes her camera, her eye is always drawn to the most vivid, even lurid, hue, often in otherwise featureless landscapes. Thus her essay on frozen Nordic landscapes focuses on the likes of scarlet road-traffic signs or implausibly cheery advertising hoardings, while her work documenting the uncompromising emptiness of the rural American heartland captures items such as a newly painted holiday cabin on an otherwise-bleak lake shoreline



or a vermilion-and-white tricycle, abandoned on the prairie.

Unusual cropping and off-centre compositions are also something of a Laval signature. This approach has unexpected benefits; *The New York Times Magazine* frequently uses her work to illustrate governmental

turmoil, specifically because her skewed shots of the White House, the Capitol and other state institutions neatly illustrate the chaos. But there is nothing chaotic or random in Laval's practice: the irregularity is all on the other side of the lens.

Sean Louth

Above: Image © Karine Laval.

In print

Leisure – photographs by Karine Laval, is on show at Crane Kalman Brighton, 38 Kensington Gardens, North Laine, Brighton, until 11 July.

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